NCA
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SOVIET EMIGRATION LAWS REVISED

ANNCR:

SOVIET AUTHORITIES ARE REVISING REGULATIONS DEALING WITH EMIGRATION. VOA CORRESPONDENT MARK HOPKINS SENDS THIS BACKGROUND REPORT.

VOICE:

MOST OF THE REVISIONS WILL CUT DOWN ON THE PAPERWORK AND COST OF EMIGRATING FROM THE SOVIET UNION. SOVIET AND WESTERN SOURCES IN MOSCOW AGREE, HOWEVER, THAT REVISED RULES WILL NOT NECESSARILY MAKE IT EASIER TO GET PERMISSION TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY.

ONE SOVIET LEGAL EXPERT SAYS THAT NEW LEGISLATION IS BEING PREPARED ON EMIGRATION -- THE FIRST SINCE NINETEEN THIRTY-EIGHT. THIS SOURCE SAYS THAT THE LEGISLATION WILL DESCRIBE MORE EXACTLY RESTRICTIONS ON EMGIGRATION. HE DESCRIBES THIS AS A STEP FORWARD. EMIGRATION APPLICATIONS IN THE SOVIET UNION HAVE OFTEN BEEN HANDLED "ADMINISTRATIVELY" -- MEANING THAT DECISIONS HAVE BEEN MADE ERRATICALLY, SOMETIMES AT PERSONAL WHIM. THE LEGISLATION REPORTEDLY WILL SET OUT MORE PRECISELY WHO IN THE SOVIET UNION IS A SECURITY RISK AND PROHIBITED FROM LEAVING THE COUNTRY. IT WILL COVER MORAL QUALIFICATIONS FOR EMIGRATION, AND PERSONS WITH SO CALLED "UNFULFILLED OBLIGATIONS" -- AN EXAMPLE BEING CARE OF CHILDREN LEFT BEHIND.

SOVIET AUTHORITIES HAVE ALREADY MADE SOME CHANGES IN EMIGRATION PROCEDURES -- MOSTLY AFFECTING SOVIET

JEWS, THE LARGEST SINGLE GROUP OF SOVIET CITIZENS LEAVING THE COUNTRY. THE COST OF AN EXIST VISA FEE HAS BEEN REDUCED BY ONE HUNDRED RUBLES TO THREE HUNDRED -- OR ABOUT FOUR HUNDRED DOLLARS. ADVANCE PAYMENT FOR A PASSPORT -- COSTING FORTY RUBLES -- WILL BE REFUNDED IF A SOVIET CITIZEN IS DENIED AN EXIT VISA. LOCAL PASSPORT OFFICES -- CALLED O-V-I-R -- WILL HAVE FINAL DECISIONS ON EMIGRATION.

THESE CHANGES COME SIX MONTHS AFTER A THIRTY-FIVE NATION SUMMIT IN HELSINKI ON BROADER EUROPEAN COOPERATION IN POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS. AND THEY APPEAR TO FOLLOW AGREEMENT TO EASE EMIGRATION IN ALL THE COUNTRIES. BUT IT IS NOT CLEAR THAT SOVIET REVISION OF EMIGRATION RULES MEANS THAT MORE PEOPLE CAN LEAVE THE SOVIET UNION. A SOVIET SOURCE SAID THE REVISION DOES NOT CONCERN FREEDOM OF TRAVEL, BUT MORE THE LEGAL STATUS OF WOULD BE EMIGRANTS. A WESTERN DIPLOMAT SAID, TOO, THAT IT IS DIFFICULT TO JUDGE NOW WHETHER MORE SOVIET CITIZENS WILL BE ALLOWED TO EMIGRATE.

SOVIET JEWISH EMIGRATION DROPPED TO ABOUT TWELVE THOUSAND LAST YEAR. IT HAS BEEN DECLINING SINCE A PEAK OF ABOUT THIRTY-FIVE THOUSAND IN NINETEEN SEVENTY-THREE. SOVIET OFFICIAL SOURCES SAY THAT FEWER SOVIET JEWS WANT TO EMIGRANT. SOVIET JEWS CONTEND THAT EMIGRATION POLICY HAS BEEN TIGHTENED.

ONE SOVIET SOURCE SAYS THAT THE ISSUE OF OPEN SOVIET FRONTIERS IS A LONG-TERM PROBLEM. FREER TRAVEL -- WHATEVER THE REGULATIONS -- WILL COME ONLY GRADUALLY, HE SAYS, AS

POLITICAL ATTITUDES TOWARD PATRIOTISM AND LOYALTY CHANGE. LEAVING THE SOVIET UNION STILL IS CONSIDERED BY MANY AN ACT OF BETRAYAL.

GH/RCS